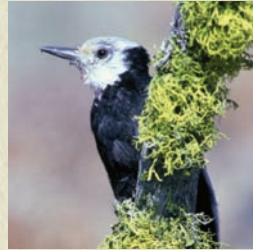
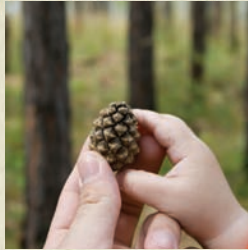


A large background image showing sunlight filtering through a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The sun is low in the sky, creating a warm, golden glow and long shadows on the forest floor.

The USDA Farm Bill:

WHAT IS IN IT FOR WOODLAND OWNERS?





Why is the 2008 Farm Bill important to me?

As the owner of forested property or woodlands, you may qualify for landowner assistance under the 2008 Farm Bill program. If the future plans or goals for your property include:

- Conserving soil and water resources
- Establishing wildlife habitat
- Sustaining your woodlands
- Implementing your forest management plan
- Restoring wetlands

This Farm Bill has opportunities for those interested in technical and financial assistance for applying conservation activities in their woodlands.

What are the benefits for woodland owners like me?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a variety of financial incentives to woodland owners who are engaged in conservation activities. Some programs offer annual payments for a conservation use, others offer one-time up-front payments for long-term easements conservation, and most include government funds to share the cost of implementing your forest management plan.

| Curbing water erosion | Conserving soil and water resources | Establishing wildlife habitat | Managing forest lands | Implementing your forest management plan | Restoring wetlands | Create a Forest Management Plan |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| CRP EQIP CSP | CRP EQIP CSP | WHIP CRP WRP EQIP CSP | WHIP CRP EQIP Forest Legacy Program | WHIP EQIP | CRP WRP EQIP | Forest Stewardship Program EQIP |

For specific program information, see pages 6-9.

What do I need to do? To qualify for assistance, follow these steps:

Develop your forest management plan

A forest management plan is a document that you develop and write with a professional forester. The plan outlines the values and goals you have for your property and how you will manage the woodlands for long-term sustainability. Examples include wildlife, recreation, aesthetics, timber, watershed protection, carbon, or any other value you deem important..



Why is a forest management plan important?

A forest management plan, if developed by a professional forester and put into practice, can ensure the long-term sustainability of those multiple benefits that are important to you. It is also a requirement before accessing financial assistance with some Farm Bill programs.

How do I develop a forest management plan?

To develop your plan, you will need to work with a professional forester – contact your state forester for planning assistance opportunities. Contact information for your state forester can be found at www.stateforesters.org

What are the different types of management plans?

- **Forest Stewardship Plan** is developed under the Forest Stewardship Program, may meet planning requirements for Farm Bill programs. For more information on the Forest Stewardship Program, visit www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/
- **Other forestry plans** - need approval by the state forester and the state conservationist:
 - **An American Tree Farm System® plan** www.treefarmssystem.org
 - **A Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Forest Management Plan.** For more information visit www.nrcs.usda.gov



What should my forest management plan include?

To be eligible for NRCS cost-share programs, you will need to ensure that your current plan includes specific information on forest management, conservation practices, and an updated map that clearly indicates locations of proposed cost-share practices. Work with your forester and local NRCS office to ensure your plan has all necessary information.

How do I apply?

The application process can be daunting if you are not familiar with the steps. Before you can complete a program application, you will need to sign up with the USDA. Here is an introduction to the basics steps:

1. **Locate your nearest USDA Service Center by visiting:** <<http://offices.usda.gov>>. Your local USDA Service Center can answer questions and provide the necessary forms and applications.
2. **Get your information together in advance.** To ensure the application process goes smoothly, gather your information before going to your local service center. Contact your local USDA Service Center if you have any questions. You will need:
 - a. *Deed for your property*
 - b. *Forest management plan*
 - c. *Form CCC-926 Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Statement.* You will need to complete this form for the previous three years of tax returns.
3. **Register at your USDA Service Center;** Your local service center employee will assist you in registering. You will need:
 - a. *Name, address, and property information*
 - b. *Completed AGI form:* This self-report form is used to determine if you meet the AGI limitation for program participation.
 - c. *Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Determination form*
4. **Complete your program application:** Once you have completed registration, the next step is to complete a program application for the Farm Bill programs that are of interest to you.

- **Landowners who do not reside on their property.** Registration must occur at the local USDA Service Center near your woodlands. Call in advance and make an appointment. Make sure you have all necessary documentation beforehand. You may authorize a power of attorney to a relative, partner, or consulting forester who lives near your property who would register on your behalf.
- **Woodlands owned by a limited liability corporation/LLC, partnership, or other legal entity.** USDA will need information from all partners. A designated lead can sign and register for the entire organization. Please contact your USDA Service Center for details.

Which programs apply to me?

The programs that apply to you depend on what type of conservation activities you are interested in doing on your property. With all of the different acronyms used, the Farm Bill programs can start to seem like an alphabet soup.

Farm Bill Programs Chart

| | Farm Bill Program | Description | Types of Activities | Agency | States Eligible |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|--------|--|
| Working Lands Conservation | Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) | Financial and technical assistance incentives to promote agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible goals; optimize environmental benefits; and help farmers and ranchers meet environmental regulations | State Conservationist identifies priority resource concerns with advice of State Technical Committee | NRCS | All |
| | Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) | Assistance to develop and improve wildlife habitat, including threatened and endangered species; can focus program on special areas, habitats, or species | State Conservationist identifies priority resource concerns with advice from the State Technical Committee | NRCS | All |
| | Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) | Encourages producers to undertake additional conservation activities or improve, maintain, and manage existing conservation activities | State Conservationist will rank and select applications (activities) based on national, state, and local criteria. | NRCS | All |
| Wood Energy | Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) | Assistance for establishment, production, harvest, storage and transport of renewable biomass | Establishment, production, harvest, storage, or transport of renewable biomass | FSA | Requires establishment of BCAP project areas by the Secretary of Agriculture |
| Emergency Programs | Emergency Forest Restoration Program | Available to NIPF owners to restore landscapes damaged by fire, drought, flood and other natural disasters; Funding subject to appropriation | Payments for emergency measures to NIPF landowners to restore landscapes damaged by fire, drought, flood, and other natural disasters | FSA | All, where there is a natural disaster that has damaged NIPF land, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture |

You can work with the USDA or your state forestry agency to find the right program for you. If you have not applied before or have been overwhelmed by the process or the array of programs available, then this information should help.

| Forestland Eligible | Length of Agreement | Easements | Payments | Forest Landowner's Obligations |
|--|--------------------------------------|-----------|---|--|
| Nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land | More than 1 year, less than 10 years | N/A | Up to 75% of the cost of the conservation practice or 100% of estimate income forgone by producer to implement particular conservation practices; no more than \$300,000 over six years | Develop and implement a forest management plan; assist with cost and establishment of conservation practices |
| NIPF and tribal land; government land not eligible | More than 1 year, less than 10 years | N/A | Up to 75% of wildlife habitat development practices | Develop and implement a forest management plan that includes the development of wildlife habitat; assist with installation costs |
| Meet "stewardship threshold" for at least one resource concern and address one additional priority resource concern; up to 10% of enrolled acreage may be in NIPF land | 5 years | N/A | May not exceed \$200,000 for all contracts entered into during a five-year period | Develop and implement a forest management plan that includes installing or maintaining conservation practices |
| NIPF land eligible with a forest stewardship plan; producer contracts with USDA | 15 years | N/A | Up to 75% of the cost of site preparation and tree planting | Compliance with highly erodible land and wetlands requirements; forest stewardship plan; site preparation or tree planting |
| NIPF land; tree cover must have been on the land immediately before the natural disaster | N/A | N/A | Up to 75% of the cost of the emergency measures | 25% cost share; carry out emergency measures |

Farm Bill Programs Chart (cont.)

| | Farm Bill Program | Description | Types of Activities | Agency | States Eligible |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|--------|---|
| Conservation Easement/ Reserve | Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) | Restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems for threatened/endangered species, biodiversity, or carbon sequestration; State Conservationist submits proposals to the Chief of NRCS for funding selection | Conservation Easements, protection, enhancement, maintenance, and management of habitat and forest ecosystem functions and values | NRCS | AK, ME, MN, MS, GA, IN, OK, OR |
| | Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) | Opportunity to receive financial incentives to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture | Restore, improve, and protect wetland functions and values | NRCS | All |
| | Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) | Help farmers and ranchers preserve their agricultural land; provide matching funds to state, tribal, and local governments and NGOs to purchase conservation easements | State Conservationist identifies priority resource concerns with advice of State Technical Committee | NRCS | All |
| | Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) | Helps agricultural producers safeguard environmentally sensitive land; CRP is for conversion of marginal cropland to long-term conservation cover, either grass or trees | Includes, but not limited to, tree planting, permanent wildlife habitat establishment, and wetland restoration; management activities can include tree thinning | FSA | All |
| | Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) | Special initiative within CRP to address agricultural resource problems; targeting priority environmental needs and providing additional incentives for conservation; voluntary land retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water | Filter strips and forested buffers; develop and restore wetlands | FSA | All, though since it is a partnership between tribal, federal, state governments, and sometimes private groups and they identify an agriculture-related issue, this can determine the specific geographic areas and practices |
| | Forest Legacy Program | Grants to states to protect important forest areas | A nationally competitive federal program in partnership with states to protect environmentally sensitive forest lands; entirely volunteer; designed to encourage protection of privately owned forestlands | USFS | All |

| Forestland Eligible | Length of Agreement | Easements | Payments | Forest Landowner's Obligations |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| All private forestlands that have an HFRP restoration plan | Permanent or 30-year easements; 30-year contracts (tribal lands only); restoration cost-share agreements | Permanent or 30 years | 10-year contracts: 50% of the average costs; 30-year easement/contracts: may receive 75% of market value of enrolled land; permanent easements: may receive up to 100% of market value of enrolled land | For easements, the owner shall cooperate in the restoration, protection, enhancement, maintenance, and management of the land in accordance with the easement or contract |
| Includes floodplain forest; must have owned land for more than seven years; government land is not eligible; wetland must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits | Permanent or 30-year easements, 30-year contracts (tribal lands only), restoration cost share agreements | Permanent or 30 years | Permanent: up to 100% of the cost of acquisition and restoration; 30-year easements: up to 75% of the cost of acquisition and restoration; up to 75% of restoration and contract payment equal to 30-year easement acquisition cost; restoration cost-share agreement: up to 75% of restoration cost | Develop and implement a wetland restoration plan that includes the restoration and maintenance of wetlands that will include management of forestland; if necessary, assist with the cost of restoration |
| NIPF land eligible if it contributes to economic viability of agricultural operation or serves as buffer to protect an agricultural operation from development; forest management plan required if forestland is 10+ acres or 10% of area; easement areas must be less than 2/3 forestland | Permanent | Permanent | NRCS may provide up to 50% of the fair market value of the conservation easement | Develop and implement a forest management plan and comply with terms of the easement |
| Eligible land is agricultural land meeting cropland definitions, including having been cropped four out of the six years previous to the passage of the Farm Bill | 10-15 years | N/A | 50% cost share | Develop and implement a forest management plan for the conversion of cropland to a less-intensive use; also assist with the cost, establishment, and maintenance of conservation practices |
| Mainly riparian buffers and wetland restoration | 10-15 years | N/A | Federal annual rental rate plus cost share of up to 50% of the eligible cost to install the practice | Develop and implement a forest management plan for the conversion of cropland to a less-intensive use; assist with the cost, establishment, and maintenance of conservation practices |
| Private forestland within a state-defined Forest Legacy Area | Permanent | Yes, fee simple purchases also allowed | Federal government may fund up to 75% of project costs, with at least 25% coming from private, state, or local sources | To qualify, landowners prepare a multiple resource management plan as part of the conservation easement acquisition |



Where can I learn more?

Your local USDA Service Center

<<http://offices.usda.gov>>

- Technical assistance
- Program applications, due dates, and eligible practices
- Development, and if approved, implementation of conservation program application

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) <www.nrcs.usda.gov>

- Technical assistance
- Program applications, due dates, and eligible practices
- Development, and if approved, implementation of conservation program application
- Specific programs: EQIP, WHIP, CSP, HFRP, WRP, FRPP

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) <www.fsa.usda.gov>

- Program applications, due dates, eligible practices, and more.
- Development, and if approved, implementation of conservation program application
- Specific programs: CRP, BCAP and Emergency Forest Restoration Program

U.S. Forest Service <www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/>

- Technical assistance
- Forest Stewardship Program
- Forest Legacy Program

Your state forestry agencies

- Technical assistance
- Forest management plan development through the Forest Stewardship Program
- Other opportunities for woodland owners [cost-share program]
- Find your state forester and your state forestry agency, visit <www.stateforesters.org/about_nasf> or <www.treefarmsystem.org/stateforesters>

Certified Technical Service Providers: individuals and organizations that USDA certifies as able to provide additional technical service for Farm Bill programs. Contact your local USDA Service Center for more information on the technical assistance available to woodland owners.

How did these opportunities come about?

More than 30 organizations partnered to create the Forests in the Farm Bill Coalition to advocate for private forest landowners. The Forest in the Farm Bill Coalition, along with hundreds of family forest owners like you, worked together to send a clear and concise message to Congress, "Family forest owners are in many ways like your typical family farmer, they too need assistance and incentives to protect the nation's water and air, conserve our soils, provide wildlife habitat, and produce renewable energy feedstocks." Congress listened, making many changes to the conservation, forestry, and energy programs to allow family forest owners to participate in these opportunities.



Associations American Forests
 American Forest & Paper Association
 American Forest Foundation
 American Forest Resource Council
 American Tree Farm System
 Association of Consulting Foresters
 Chesapeake Bay Commission
 Eastern Forest Partnership
 Environmental Defense
 Environment and Energy Study Institute
 Hardwood Federation
 Maryland Forests Association
 National Association of State Foresters
 National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
 National Association of University Forest Resources Programs
 National Wildlife Federation
 National Wild Turkey Federation
 National Woodland Owners Association
 Northern Forest Alliance
 Northwest Woodland Owners Council
 Pacific Forest Trust
 Pinchot Institute for Conservation
 Quail Unlimited
 Ruffed Grouse Society
 Siuslaw Institute, Inc
 Society of American Foresters
 Southeast Quail Study Group
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American Forest Foundation



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